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SUBJECT: ANC NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL REIGNS IN ITS WESTERN CAPE
PROVINCIAL LEADERS

11. (U) On December 17 and 18, the ANC National Executive Council (NEC) met to discuss its roadmap for the upcoming months, in particular with regards to the ANC provincial leadership in the Western Cape. The Western Cape Provincial leadership of the African National Congress (ANC) is again under fire this time for its failure to register candidates on time for the recent by-elections and the party's subsequent poor performance in the province. The ruling party secured only three of the 27 wards contested in the recent by-elections in the Western Cape. The ANC said it would have performed better at the polls had its candidates in 12 of the wards been allowed to stand. The blame for the by-election shambles has been placed firmly at the door of provincial chairperson, Mcebisi Skwatsha.

12. (U) The NEC decided not to suspend Skwatsha, but stripped the provincial leadership of all powers. When asked by reporters whether Skwatsha had been sanctioned for the party's failure to register for the recent by-elections, national ANC spokesperson Carl Niehaus said he had not. Emphasis had instead been put on what to do to strengthen the party. Rather than disband the provincial leadership and risk the total collapse of the party in the region, the NEC will take control of the province. In addition, a high profile team of top ANC officials has been deployed to the Western Cape to ensure effective campaigning and strong leadership in the run up to the national elections.

13. (SBU) On December 19, Poloff spoke to the Chief Whip of the ANC (Booi), himself a member of the NEC, regarding the political situation in the Western Cape. Booi said Skwatsha would remain in office, but has been stripped of any decision making authority. A team of NEC members has been sent to the Western Cape to try and strengthen the party in the run up to the 2009 national elections. Booi also said the ANC is focusing heavily on the Western Cape in the 2009 elections and, "will put a lot of energy into the Province." He also said that current polls indicate the ANC will win 26 percent of the vote in the Western Cape, "but the ANC wants more." Poloff asked why the ANC is weaker in the Western Cape than in other areas of SA and Booi responded, "because the core of the community is colored and the colored are divided between the ANC and other opposition parties." He said the ANC will heavily target the colored communities in their Western Cape election campaigns. Booi believes the low voter turnout in the recent by-law elections shows "the people are angry that the ANC was not allowed to run and thinks that the people who failed to vote as a protest to the by-law elections, would vote for the ANC in the national elections."

14. (U) Comment: There is a growing political weakness (as well as endemic disarray) in the ANC in the Western Cape; the leadership in the province has long been surrounded by controversy and plagued with problems. The former Premier Ebrahim Rasool was sacked, aggravating discontent among the colored voters, the provincial secretary was stabbed in the neck at a party event, and countless other party meetings have been marred by intimidation and allegations of patronage and vote-buying. When the ANC Youth League gathered to elect its leadership in April, the conference was suspended after some delegates got into drunken brawls, throwing chairs and exposing themselves to the media. The ANC recently

expelled many of its regional secretaries in the Western Cape and local members feel that the only thing that helped Skwatsha maintain order was the fact that he had strong regional secretaries who did the hard work and were able to cover for his inefficiency.

15. (U) Comment: The latest by-election debacle is merely another step in the continued downward spiral of the ANC in the province. The Western Cape has never been won outright by the ANC and remains the only province where the party is not dominant. The City of Cape Town is already in the hands of the opposition alliance and the ANC has been struggling to regain its foothold in the province. With the emergence of Cope and the strong gains made by the Democratic Alliance in the by-election, it appears unlikely that the ANC will make any significant gains in the province despite deploying members to manage the party in the region. End comment.